



City of Malden

Malden City Hall
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Meeting Minutes - Final Personnel/Appointments Committee

*Councillors Crowe (Chair), DeMaria (Vice Chair), Condon,
Anderson, Matheson*

Monday, October 22, 2018

5:30 PM John & Christina Markey Senior Community Center, 7
Washington St.

Roll Call

Present: 9 - Councillor Peg Crowe, Councillor Barbara Murphy, Paul Condon, David Camell, John P. Matheson, Deborah DeMaria, Stephen Winslow, Craig Spadafora and Ryan O'Malley

Also Present: Councillors DeMaria, Winslow, Spadafora and O'Malley
Drew Zamani-Chairman, Board of Registrar of Voters
Kahey Young-Board of Registrar of Voters
Anthony Chiccuarelli-HR Director
Maria Luise-Mayor's Office
Tom Brennan-City Clerk

Councillor Crowe called the meeting to order at 5:34 PM.
Brian DeLacey will be filming the meeting.

Minutes to be Approved

Minutes of the September 25, 2018 meeting to be approved.
Minutes of the October 16, 2018 meeting to be approved.

A motion was made by Deborah DeMaria, seconded by Councillor David Camell, that the minutes from September 25, 2018 and October 16, 2018 were approved. The motion carried unanimously.

Business

The committee will meet with the City Clerk to understand the concerns pertaining to the primary election held on September 4, 2018 and to ensure and identify best practices are in place for the upcoming general election on November 6, 2018. Also the City Clerk will provide the Council with an action plan of improvement for the election.

All City Clerk employees are invited to the meeting.

The committee is meeting to understand concerns pertaining to the primary election and to ensure and identify best practices are in place for the upcoming general election with a plan in place for November 6th. They have invited all the employees from the City Clerk's office since they all play a role in the election. There were some hiccups in the primary election and they have asked Karen Anderson, former City Clerk to help out with the upcoming election. Tom Brennan, City Clerk hands out a presentation he has put together for the committee (see enclosed). Councillor Crowe asks him to walk

them through the handout and asks him to explain what steps he has taken, what his plan is and how he will manage the upcoming general election.

Mr. Brennan explains that all the transfer boxes with ballots were loaded and delivered at 6AM in the morning to the polls sometime after midday more people than they anticipated came out to vote and they began getting calls there were not enough ballots. He feels there was a breakdown in communication between the polling places and the Clerk's office at one point the Police Officer on duty in the office on Election Day was brought to the various polling places instead of being in the office. The Wardens at the polling places are supposed to call the Clerk's office when they break the band on the last 100 ballots he is not certain if they could not get through to the office by phone. He received one call from 5-2 saying they only had twelve ballots left @ 5:00P.M. in the afternoon. Joe Connolly has been working for the office for twenty years is a retired police officer who circulates ballots and was able to get to some and some he didn't.

Councillor Camell he asks for a breakdown and asks what percentage was put out at first and how many we hold in reserve can you explain why they are distributed the way they are why we hold some in reserve and send some at 6 AM. If the Secretary of State's office projects and we know the percentage he asks why we don't put extra out in the beginning of the day.

Mr. Brennan the staff based on past performances says the Secretary of State says we are going to have a certain 8% turnout we look at the absentee ballots requested and make a guesstimate the exact number he is not aware of what is put in there. Based on that projection the transfer cases are packed and delivered. He feels some Wards were 12%-18% and 24%. Mr. Brennan answers that the transfer boxes get heavy so that's why they only send the % in the beginning he has three pieces of equipment that have to be delivered it is too cumbersome to send them all at once.

Councillor Spadafora says you mentioned they break the band at 100 this is your second election typically what do they do when they break that band, they are supposed to call the clerk's office and say they are down to 100 what's the process of getting them from the Clerk's office to the polls.

Tom says Joe Connolly has some in his car and also they have some in the office and he delivers them and if they can't get him Tom would call Captain Cronin and he could deliver them they have to be delivered by a police officer.

Councillor Spadafora says so you say they were down to 100 they didn't call right away so what happens

Tom says they just ran out he says the poll workers are good but it gets busy some of them are older they get tired and he doesn't know what happened but they just didn't call

Councillor Camell says this happened in multiple locations

Tom says he thinks three

Councillor Spadafora asks do we not keep extras on site for security reasons

Tom says the logistics of transporting them at the end of the night historically that's the way they have done it

Councillor Winslow asks if Tom or the office could answer is it very typical during the election to have to call for more ballots it sounds like there is a routine to refresh the

ballots is it typical for people to have to call to get them

Tom says he doesn't know if he would say typical is appropriate he brought charts to show at different times and years the turnout is higher so there would be more of a tendency to request more ballots it has happened in the past.

Councillor Winslow says it has happened in the past and it's not unusual

Drew says the last packet has a seal which says call city hall to get more some may not have called. He mentions them checking in with the polls they feel it's best for the poll workers to check in with the Clerk's office because you do have to have the Police Officer to deliver them.

Tom says this year was crazy they have been working with the Dept. of Justice for all the bilingual information we got to City Hall early and the Poll workers and police came to pick up the ballots. The Senior Center didn't open till 6:45AM Dept of Justice was supposed to be there at 8:00 and didn't get there till 9:30AM he left after the Dept of Justice to check Ward 2 & 3 to make sure the signage was up properly they said they did well but want more signs up for bilingual in the next election

Councillor Murphy says three precincts ran out of ballots did you meet with the poll workers after that to see what went wrong.

Tom says we have had a couple of meetings and trainings since then and we are going to send out a letter to reiterate to them know that they need to let us know they are out of ballots

Councillor Murphy asks what was their reasoning for running out

Tom says some of them said they couldn't get through to the office even during the election we are still running the office waiting on customers and get a lot of calls in it's a normal day on top of the election

Councillor Murphy says this is odd that this happened she says in ten years she doesn't remember this happening this is unusual the ball got dropped somewhere. Do these people need to be fired did you meet with them the next day to see what went wrong

Tom says no not the next day. The officer that was supposed to be in the office wasn't there he was out delivering ballots he is there to take radio calls to the office if the person couldn't get through

Councillor Murphy says are you saying it's the fault of the police office not the poll workers

Tom says the officer was taken out by an employee out of the office to deliver ballots with no ill intent when they should have called Capt. Cronin to send over another car

Councillor Spadafora says on an election day it is hard to get in touch with the office the poll workers use their personal cell phones if they can't get an answer they let the Police Officer know and they radio the Police Officer in your office and the Officer wasn't there so there was no communication. In this day and age you have to have a better way to communicate and you need a Police Officer to deliver them with you

Councillor O'Malley asks if he had any help preparing the handout

Tom says not really no. His wife helped him

Councillor O'Malley says you talked about voter turnout being unusually high than anticipated you have a figure there what election did you compare it to figure out what the projection might be

Tom says we didn't compare it to any it is based on what the guestimate was from the Sec of State and the amount of absentee ballots

Councillor O'Malley asked what the Sec of State projection looked like and asked what the number is

Tom says 10% not very high they just give a percentage not a number

Councillor O'Malley says with that it seems like another step needed to occur you need a figure to know how many ballots you may need. Voter turnout was 5,857 in 2018 you don't know what it was for 2016 and 2014 that wasn't looked into before the election

Tom says no

Councillor Crowe goes back to the Officer in the office. She had gone into the office and it was Captain Sheridan and he has been on the force for a while. She went to Ward 1 and they ran out and the Assistant Registrar of Voters brought some over. She asks with 3 Police Officers nobody could get in touch with anyone. The officer was out on the road because multiple places were calling and he was waiting for his replacement but he had to be on the move because we were in a dire situation to say the officer left the office seems like there was more going on

Councillor Camell says you spoke to people but not the same day when was the training

Tom says he met with the Mayor, Maria Luise and Council President DeMaria the next day for the analysis. Training wasn't until October 5th & 15th

Councillor Camell the primary was on September 4th there was kind of a gap

Tom says we were gearing up for the next election

Councillor Crowe asks what did you do to prepare for the training do you use a curriculum something from the Secretary of States office and did you do the training

Tom says no Carol Ann and Karen Anderson did the trainings he was at one of them and they used the Poll book which is full of instructions step by step

Councillor Crowe says what was your role in the training

Tom says he made suggestions about the Department of Justice things and about people coming to observe such as the Asian Defense league and Dept of Justice and talked about what they can and cannot do while observing

Councillor O'Malley asked him to explain why he said he didn't know about historic data such as 2014 and 2016 elections but why did you use the data you did use in your presentation

Tom says he was showing the differences in the years with the elections what kind of a turnout. He did the most recent elections

Councillor O'Malley asks him if he feels there is a difference with different elections

Tom says he does but he also feels it depends on who is running the candidates it doesn't seem to be much interest this year not the office they are running for

Councillor O'Malley says if he was doing this he would have looked at other state primaries such as Presidential Elections and City elections. He feels his data was general election information he feels one thing missing from his information is state primaries rather than depending on the Sec of State giving a percentage he would have went back and found out how many people voted in comparable elections

Councillor DeMaria asks could you share with me with preparations for the election what was your management skill to getting through the election successfully

Tom says he has CarolAnn who has been doing this longer than he has and he relies on Karen Anderson because they are the ones who are driving this he is just learning it's not like you have a meeting every week it's tough to put all the pieces together. It's not like you have a meeting every week. He relies on them Karen has been there for 30 years and is a tough act to follow and CarolAnn has worked with her also and she does a good job that is primarily what he relied on.

Councillor DeMaria asked if he had a chance to do a briefing before the election

Tom says he wouldn't say it's a briefing. It's very hectic it starts out slow, slow then everything happens at once. The office is running like it's from the 1030's the ladies load into the system for example Tom Brennan-Democrat the machine spits out two papers each request has five steps none of its automated it takes five or six hours to input 1,000 new voters then Morgan crops the signature card and files it into the archives.

Councillor DeMaria asks Tom what was his role in all of that

Tom says he did whatever they asked of him mostly folding and sealing. He is not that fast on the computer and be down in the basement moving old ballots out. He mentions three machines that were broken and he got them for no cost from the Secretary of State's office he had to take the old machines apart.

Councillor DeMaria says for today but what about on election day

Tom got there early spoke with the Dept of Justice for about an hour and he was told he did this wrong he hopped in his own car and went to Ward 3 and asked if the Dept of Justice had come by and he told them not to be nervous if they come by to observe sometimes they could be bullying. He went to about three or four Wards and went back to the office to wait on customers

Councillor Murphy says when the training occurred why didn't you go to both of them

Tom says he can't remember where he was he wasn't around on the second one

Councillor Murphy asks better communication between the Clerk's office, poll workers and police department what does that mean

Tom says when the poll workers break that 100 band they need to let us know right away and if they can't get to the office they need to let the police know to radio into the office

Councillor Murphy says are these new poll workers this has never happened she struggles with this it hasn't happened in ten years and she wants to know what is the root cause of the problem

Tom says he just doesn't know it just happened this election he doesn't know it didn't happen in the last election for some reason it happened with the calls

Councillor Murphy says if it happened in one polling place but it happened in multiple places she says there has to be a reason and it can't happen again she wants to know what went wrong and how to address it. Something obviously went terribly wrong

Kathleen Young asks Tom if he asked why the poll workers who were trained why they didn't call specifically

Tom says they said they couldn't get through

Kathleen says we should have an answer for every poll where there was an issue

Councillor Spadafora says we know what happened we ran out of ballots how many times in the last ten years have they gotten down to the last 100 and had to call because if they are calling the clerk's office and they are not getting them there it's a problem with the Clerk's office if they can't get in touch with the office and the Police Officer is not there to get the call its communication. Is it common in elections to get more ballots. Is it a combination of having a new clerk, new poll workers, new police officers he does know that trying to get in touch with the Clerk's office from past elections is a tough task because they are busy there is probably more than just one thing that happened. The communication has to be better than going through the Police it's probably more than one thing

Councillor Murphy was hoping for concrete data for why this happened and this is what we are doing to solve it. Problem, solution and implementation. How do you determine how many ballots to send

Tom says it's based upon past elections and the percentage from the Secretary of State and he relied on Karen Anderson what she thought.

Councillor Murphy says that's ok but she is not the City Clerk she has a wealth of knowledge we need to take our own data and should take our information and determine the number of ballots

Tom says we will do that going forward

Councillor O'Malley says you are in charge of orderly administration of state, federal and local elections do you know how to put on elections

Tom says not 100% to be frank that's why he relies on the staff

Councillor O'Malley do you know how to prepare a voting list

Tom says you go into the state system and that generates the list

Councillor O'Malley asks how you determine the equipment and staff at a polling place how do we prepare for an election

Tom says the equipment is all the same the voting box and the counting machine and the ballots the booths then you have a Warden and a couple of clerks

Councillor O'Malley says do some precincts have more than others and how do you determine how many to put at each

Tom says he would defer to CarolAnn and Karen on that

Councillor O'Malley asks do you know how to train poll workers

Tom says not 100% but to some degree

Councillor O'Malley asks do you know how to test the voting equipment and how does a state election vs a local election and federal election differ

Tom says he will be testing the equipment tomorrow and in terms of mechanics he says the elections don't differ

Councillor Camell says he understand relying on people who have more detail but there are procedures in place given the feedback and did you ask those questions ahead of time and touch bases ahead of time and have a plan did you ask CarolAnn and the people running the election specifically if there was anything they needed

Tom says not specifically he says they are pretty self-sufficient they go on their own

Councillor Camell says they are working on their own but they need management structure

Councillor Matheson if we were to run out of ballots in the upcoming election what have we done differently and how are we prepared now differently than last month

Tom says for one thing he spoke to Captain Cronin and asked his officers to be more pro-active

If the Warden can't get through to the office they need to talk to the police officer

Councillor Matheson asks if he has a city cell phone. He says he needs a hotline to get through to Tom on Election Day

Councillor Spadafora says he thinks Tom should have a phone the poll workers should be able to text him and have a trail. He suggests meeting with the poll workers one more time before the election and pro-actively call every ward three times a day and track it and they will never have to call him.

Tom says his thought was he would have Joe Connolly start the rounds at 10 AM to all the Wards then he would start an hour later at Ward 8 and make the rounds

Councillor O'Malley says you were asked earlier what the root of the problem was do you know now after this discussion

Tom says if he knew he would tell them this is the exact reason why. He says the poll workers need to call it does get hectic and he would like to deliver the ballots but can't do it alone. He feels it is a combination of things you point the finger at me and I can't point the finger at anyone or anything across.

Councillor O'Malley says he is not trying to do that but he says it sounds like you think it is a mixture of things and there was a breakdown in communication can you identify any of the other parts maybe before the election after the election

Tom says no he feels CarolAnn did a great job Karen helped her she put everything together it was just those few hours when everyone ran out and we didn't get the calls and President DeMaria suggest we take a cruiser with a siren on it instead of an unmarked car

Councillor O'Malley says he feels after this discussion he feels that there were issues before the election that he is taking away and feels others are taking away such as analyzing like elections to figure out potential outcome may look like this may have broken down in this process. He asks other members of the City Clerk's office if anyone of them would like to add what they think was the breakdown in the election

CarolAnn says her recollection of the day is slightly different than Clerk Brennans she feels there were other things that lead to the chaos of the day as well. It started with the way she packed transfer boxes and she takes responsibility for that. They do look at past elections and start with what they think the turnout will be which was 10% they accommodate for a certain amount of a cushion the turnout was @ 18% and in some wards 25% and will take that into account in the next election. The cushion will be much wider and they will have much more of a safety net in November. The day started at 6AM the phone was ringing off the hook one incident was a Warden and Clerk not showing up at a precinct she had to leave the building to open a polling location. The Senior Center didn't open till 6:50 and by the time Clerk Brennan arrived to work on Election Day she had already has two phones going and text chiming at the same time. She also had to go to the Early Learning Center that needed to be told what to do because the Warden and Clerk didn't show up. It wasn't a typical day as far as elections go with things coming up but polling locations running low on ballots is not unheard of we have processes in place but some of them broke down it's just that in previous days we have run the elections so well you didn't see what was wrong because it was handled in a timely manner

Councillor Camell says there were other things that happened that took her attention which allowed the distribution issues

CarolAnn says when we opened the polls Officer Washington was new and he was the officer assigned to City Hall but he had to become her driver she couldn't wait to call Captain Cronin because there was a polling location with no Warden and it needed to get opened.

Councillor Spadafora says so that was the Officer assigned to the building

CarolAnn says at the particular time of day the polling locations needed ballots there was school traffic in the City she needed a driver so she had to use the detail officer who couldn't leave because he was waiting for his shift coverage there was a fifteen minute lag in time. Councillor Condon had called from Ward Two but that mistake will never happen again. We need all hands on deck on election day. In the past the City Clerk will be running the election from the street where she was answering questions, delivering ballots and the Assistant Registrar of Voter would be running the election from the office answering phone calls and assisting the staff to the strategy was one on the street and one in the office we didn't have that kind of organization so that was one of the issues but there were many things certainly some which will never happen again, a driver and packing more ballots.

Councillor Camell says do you think most of this was unexpected or was the nature of that talked about before the election

CarolAnn says there was no conversation brought up prior to that day on how the election would be strategized, managed or handled

Councillor Camell says do you mean that as there was no conversation pertaining to something odd that might happen or no conversation

CarolAnn says there was no conversation

Councillor Camell asks is that unusual leading up to an election

CarolAnn says in the current office it's not unusual. It is unusual historically as to how she was trained to run an election you have to be a well-oiled machine and everyone has to know what the other person is doing

Councillor Matheson asks the City Clerk in light of what you have heard today do you have a greater confidence level going into the next election

Tom answers yes

Councillor Matheson asks CarolAnn if she feels this has been helpful to identify some of the problems so that we can do a better job in the upcoming election

CarolAnn answers respectfully Sir no I don't think that this conversation has been helpful to her and she doesn't know if they feel it has been helpful but no she didn't

Drew says one of the things they discussed at a 7:00P.M. board meeting the night of election and they noticed there was an increased anxiety in the office that the office told them they had run out of ballots they discussed the count in the boxes and felt that was low with the percentage from the Sec of States office. They have had two trainings and in the upcoming election there will be two pages and the boxes will be heavy but they will put more out. He is happy with every poll having an officer. The poll workers say that the officers are very helpful to them. He likes a lot of the ideas for the upcoming election and asks for them to follow through and put them in place. Tom should be the contact person. He suggests having a tally sheet from every precinct for the day and they will have that for the future.

Councillor Spadafora says a city phone for the Clerk is imperative

Councillor Murphy says in the last election did you go to every precinct

Tom says 3, 2& 4

Councillor Murphy says you weren't the outside person and asks CarolAnn if she was doing the job of two people. What plan is in place is a Warden or Clerk don't show up

CarolAnn says yes inside and out. She has a plan in place if people don't show up the day of election in the wings and can call them in a situation like this. The custodians of the buildings are responsible for opening the buildings. It is radioed in when each location is opened.

Councillor Crowe asks what time do the poll workers get to their locations

Tom says he thinks 6:30AM

Drew says the Warden shows up as the supervisor at 6:00AM. Tom should be called by the Wardens for the ballot count only not questions just ballots being low

Councillor Crowe asks how many poll workers are assigned to each. The answer is 4

plus a Warden plus a clerk

Drew says it is the decision of the Clerks office to train the Wardens and the Clerks and they will talk and give instructions to the poll workers on Election Day from 6:15 to 7:00AM. He feels every Ward was covered with training.

Councillor Crowe says now we are into early voting what is the process during and after. Her concern is if the Assistant Registrar of Voters leaves after the election there is a lot of follow-up that needs to happen after the election.

Tom says he will double check everything with Karen tomorrow

Councillor Crowe agrees all hands on deck everybody needs to know their role within and it needs to be known by Tom

Tom says we will have a meeting and keep working together and he will work with Karen as far as a gateway for the next election

Councillor Murphy says you keep mentioning Karen have you met with CarolAnn are you two communicating regularly and have you met to have a previous conversation. CarolAnn should be an intricate part of the process

Councillor Spadafora asks if she is still leaving if she is they need a replacement real quick

CarolAnn doesn't have an end date as of right now

Councillor DeMaria thanks everyone here and says they have kept within the law with this process. While Karen is experienced she also has knowledge and that's key this is the super bowl most important thing the City Clerks office does it is communication but it is knowledge of what it takes to run the election and that is up to the City Clerk.

Councillor Murphy says we need to have a constant touch point within the next two weeks with the game plan in the election so that we know this will not happen again

Councillor Crowe says when can we expect a game plan. We will share it with the Council and the Board

Tom says he will start working on it tomorrow

Drew asks for a checklist to make sure on the day of election everyone shows up

CarolAnn says she actually has a checklist and will send it to the Councillors and Board members on Wednesday AM

Other Business

Adjournment

A motion was made by Councillor Camell, seconded by Councillor Murphy, that this meeting be adjourned. The motion carried unanimously.